

**Blighted Property Review Committee**  
**Tuesday, September 16, 2008**  
**Minutes**

**Members Attending:** L. Olsen, W. Bealer, M. Candelario, M. Wolfe

**Staff Attending:** A. Mukerji, L. Kelleher

**Others Attending:** None

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Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

Ms. Kelleher announced that Mr. Johnson called around 5 p.m. and stated that he had just arrived at the airport in Philadelphia. Although he would be delayed he would call when en route. She also noted that Ms. Mayfield, Mr. Younger, Mr. Khokhar and Mr. Franco were delayed at the Building and Fire Appeals Board hearing on the Caum Home. Ms. Kelleher also noted that Mr. Worrell from Habitat for Humanity was unable to attend this meeting but can attend the October meeting.

Mr. Olsen stated that Mr. Weiss and Mr. Kromer, from the Fels Institute will appear at the October meeting. Mr. Weiss and Mr. Kromer also requested a pre-meeting discussion with Mr. Bealer and members of the Administration. The BPRC members agreed to have Mr. Bealer represent the Committee at this meeting. Ms. Mayfield will be handling the arrangements for this meeting.

**Public Comment**

No one offered public comment

**Agenda and Minutes**

Mr. Olsen asked the Committee to review the agenda for this meeting.

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to approve the agenda for this meeting.

Ms. Kelleher apologized for not having the finalized minutes from the August meeting prepared in time for distribution at this meeting.

### **Redevelopment Authority**

Mr. Olsen welcomed Mr. Mukerji to the meeting.

Mr. Mukerji described the inherent problems with handling blighted properties city-wide. He noted the need for a focused approach and for the need to consider clearing entire city blocks in key areas to provide for redevelopment that will improve and de-densify the city. Mr. Mukerji stated that Allentown dedicates \$300,000 in CDBG funding for blighted property control; whereas Lancaster uses the CDBG facade allocation to handle blighted properties.

Mr. Olsen described the BPRC's work to find shareholders, such as NHS, Our City Reading, etc. who can take properties that will be rehabilitated. It is hoped that the Redevelopment Authority will only need to hold properties set for demolition and redevelopment.

Ms. Kelleher explained that the Administration changed their position and will not make an allocation to the Blighted Property Review Committee in the CDBG Budget. They are now asking the BPRC to submit an application and business plan. They did promise to amend the CDBG Budget in 2009 after the satisfactory documentation is approved.

Mr. Mukerji noted that this approach is ridiculous as the BPRC is working for the City. Mr. Mukerji explained that the City and County undertake the CDBG budget process together. Applications are due in March and reviewed by the City and County Community Development Departments. Recommendations are then made to the Mayor and County Commissioners. He noted that City Council has final approval of the City's CDBG Budget. Ms. Kelleher stated that the CDBG budget must be approved by November 15th each year. Mr. Mukerji promised to assist the Committee in obtaining CDBG funding.

Mr. Mukerji inquired about the BPRC's focus. Mr. Olsen explained that the BPRC selected individual properties in and around the downtown, the 600 block of North Front Street and the area between North 2nd and Schuylkill - Washington Street and Buttonwood Streets. This area was selected to support the Buttonwood Gateway and Entertainment Square.

Mr. Bealer displayed and explained the maps and Mr. Olsen explained the BPRC process to Mr. Mukerji. There was a discussion on the BPRC timelines. Mr. Mukerji explained the importance of obtaining ownership and clearing entire city blocks in key areas to allow commercial or residential redevelopment

projects. Mr. Mukerji promised to assist and support the work of the BPRC.

### **Updates**

Mr. Khokhar arrived and distributed a report on the properties selected by the Committee.

Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Lucky will be attending the BPRC meetings when Mr. Johnson cannot attend.

Mr. Khokhar will contact the HBA to arrange a meeting focused on rehabilitation of properties.

### **Other Business**

Mr. Olsen noted a request to change the BPRC meeting to the 3rd Tuesday of the month. He explained that changing the date will better suit the schedules of Mr. Johnson and Mr. Luckey.

Mr. Candelario moved, seconded by Mr. Bealer, to change the meeting day to the 3rd Tuesday of the month through the end of 2008. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bealer provided an update on his meetings with various community groups.

*Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher City Clerk*

### **FOLLOW UP ISSUES**

- Arrange meeting Mr. Kromer, Mr. Weiss, Mr. Bealer – M Mayfield
- Invite Mr. Kromer, Mr. Weiss to the October BPRC meeting – M. Mayfield
- Work with the Administration to arrange an allocation for the BPRC in the 2009 CDBG Budget – A. Mukerji
- Update targeted properties, neighborhood & area – J. Khokhar